

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

THE INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF DESIGN

FEBRUARY 2008

## SPECIAL ISSUE: BEFORE & AFTER





# Manhattan Transfer

AN ART DÉCO-INSPIRED PENTHOUSE UPDATES 1930S STYLE



BEFORE



Interior designer Charles Allen gutted a young family's Manhattan penthouse, converting it into a glamorous space that celebrates Art Déco style. INSET AND THIS IMAGE: The living room is "relaxed but formal," notes Allen, who worked with architect Josh Heitler, of Lacina Heitler Architects. A 1937 work by Picasso hangs over the mantelpiece. Pair of 1930s French cabinets and wood-arm chairs, Karl Kemp Antiques. Stark carpet.

AFTER



**M**y wife and I are cocooning types of people, who at the same time have three young kids bouncing off the walls,” says the owner of a classic eight-room Park Avenue co-op that was designed by Charles Allem. “And for that reason, we like living with a serene palette, in a calm environment, which is exactly what Charles—whom I consider a great artist—does so brilliantly. We’re good at vision, but when it comes to the interrelation of colors and textures, we need help; and Charles walks into a room and sees it through a different prism—that’s his genius.”

Still, even Allem’s considerable imagination was challenged the first time he laid eyes on the 2,750 square feet of “this gorgeous jewel of a penthouse,” he recalls. “On the one hand, there was this lavish 380-square-foot terrace and sweeping vistas of Manhattan rooftops—afire in foliage, beautiful gardens in the sky, really—visible from every window. On the other, there was that interior, untouched by the former owner for many years. So when my clients asked, ‘What can you do with it?’ I said, ‘The views are magnificent, but the place needs a bomb thrown in it.’” He laughs. “Two years later that’s essentially what we did.”

Indeed, when the smoke cleared, Allem gave his clients exactly what they wanted: “an adult apartment complementing their amazing art collection,” he says, “with formal entertaining areas, like the fab-

ulous living and dining rooms, a beautiful entryway and a jewel box of a master bedroom, as well as bigger, more casual areas where the children can do their thing.” The heart of the home, however, where the residents “spend most of our leisure time,” says the husband, is the intimate, charming family room—“a sunny family refuge,” from the designer’s point of view—flooded with light and air, thanks to three skylights salvaged from the original ceiling.

“Charles metamorphosed this space from an ugly, barely inhabitable, steel-and-glass nonfunctioning greenhouse with neither character nor depth, frigid in winter, sweltering in summer,” says the husband, “into a space whose indoor-outdoor quality provides an airy feeling that pervades the entire apartment.”

Cuing his color scheme to such an unusually visible sky, Allem chose “gorgeous Wedg-



wood- and powder-blue accents” for the living room, “complemented by coffee colors, cinnamon, parchment and brown with touches of gold throughout, especially in the dining room, which we made dresser with gold silk walls—most of the rest, of course, being Venetian plaster.”

As for the furniture, everyone was on the same Déco page. “It’s an era and a sensibil-

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: White cabinetry in the dining room was torn out and replaced with mirrors to create “a Parisian dining room cocooned in gold silk,” Allem says. The painting is by Picasso. Chandelier from Jean Karajian. Tiffany’s flatware. Silk wallcovering from Larsen. BELOW: The floor plan of the 2,750-square-foot residence.







AFTER





“The lines of Déco run parallel with contemporary so beautifully,” says Charles Allem.



ity—modern but warm—that both my wife and I gravitate to,” explains the husband. Allem concurred. “The lines of Déco run parallel with contemporary so beautifully,” he says, “that we all love it. Starting with a few Déco pieces from their previous apartment, which I also designed, we went on a real Déco purchasing campaign, like, for instance, those stunning cabinets in the living room. I don’t like a lot of furniture. If I have any design philosophy—besides, of course, the importance of the relationship with your client and that location always plays a part—it’s my love of simple lines and strong, limited pieces that stand out and work together while maintaining their in-

dividuality, like works of art.” When it came to the chairs, Allem warmed things up, eschewing “Déco-like fabrics” for suede, covering floors in contemporary carpets instead of “period-type rugs, which would have made it look old.” As a result, “the furniture collection parallels the art collection, making a great blend...everything melts together to create a comfortable New York home.” The spectacular terrace, meanwhile, is an accoutrement the couple are just beginning to enjoy, thanks to New York’s ever-longer Indian summers. “We renovated and landscaped the terrace last August, and it’s now like a backyard for us,” says the husband. “This

ABOVE AND LEFT: A bland greenhouse-style space was transformed into a bold family room with coffered ceilings and dark walnut shelving. Picasso’s linoleum-cut *Nature Morte sous la Lampe*, 1962, is displayed on the rear wall. Karl Kemp Antiques armchairs. Sofa from J. Robert Scott. Edelman leather on ottoman. Carpet from Stark.

AFTER





AFTER



LEFT INSET AND LEFT: Allem used rich fabrics and Art Déco-style furnishings to transform the master bedroom into a warm, sophisticated space. Above the bed—which he designed with a gold-leafed headboard and a frame of silk velvet, from Larsen—hangs Picasso's *Les Jeux et la Lecture*, 1953. Pollaro credenza. ABOVE: A circa 1940 painting is over an Art Déco-inspired desk. Cowtan & Tout chair silk.



BEFORE

isn't just an expanse of space but also of sight and mind. It brings your eye to the horizon; you can't quantify the depth of release it offers.

"What we wanted in this apartment was a dynamic environment: How we feel during the day is very different from how we feel at night. During the daytime, the light and air are very expansive; at night, thanks to the quietude of Charles's palette, it becomes a modern, warm, cossetting environment. I had high expectations, and Charles exceeded all of them."

As does the overall apartment. "Before we bought this, my wife saw 70 properties," he recalls. "But when she walked into this one, she knew it was special. Right away she called, saying, 'I found our home.' And she was right." □

To see more of Charles Allen's interior designs, visit [ArchitecturalDigest.com](http://ArchitecturalDigest.com).



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“The lovely terrace overlooks Park Avenue,” Allem says of the 380-square-foot space. “It connects to the family room and offers an outdoor area for family gatherings.” The poodle sculpture is by Bencomo. Chairs and tables, Restoration Hardware.